

THE OLDTIMER

BALLOT
ENCLOSED

Volume 31, Number 4

The Newsletter of the Josephine County Historical Society

October, 1996

We have a date

NOVEMBER

■ All month. Pat Bristol will have Sweet Adelines items in celebration of 50 years and also Applegate Trail artifacts in the cases at Evergreen Federal.

■ Nov. 16 is the annual meeting, 1 to 4 p.m. The program for the potluck includes music, presentation of new officers and awards, one last time at the Izaak Walton building. Bring something to share AND a white elephant gift worth about \$5 for a silent auction fundraiser.

DECEMBER

■ Christmas at the Schmidt House. As usual the house will be decorated for the holidays all month.

■ Dec. 7 is the annual GPHS Flea Market, including a society booth.

■ Dec. 14 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the Schmidt Open House is planned with music and refreshments to ring in the season.

For information on any of these events call 479-7827.

Wagons ho: Applegate train pulls in here

By Edith Decker

The wagon train rolled into Grants Pass this month and, just as in the old days, the townsfolk offered hospitality — and made a small profit in the bargain.

Members of the Josephine County Historical Society offered their two homes, the Schmidt House and the new library — and the lot between them and the yards — to the incoming Applegate Wagon Train.

Rolling from Ashland through Medford over the preceding weeks, the group of wagons and appropriately dressed wagoneers finally made it to Josephine County. After spending the night at the Josephine County Fairgrounds the group made their way into town for breakfast at the society.

While the horses were patted to excess and offered the odd feedbag or sugar cube, about 100 people came through the line for bacon, scrambled eggs, hash browns, coffee, juice and peach cobbler.

Jim Savard, Lloyd



The Applegate wagoneers rolled in Oct. 5 — hungry.

Stiewig, Roger Ramsey and Mike Oaks did all the dutch oven cooking and Judy Boling, her daughter Jean, Janet Lane and Dorae Bowen served up the grub.

Joan Momsen took tickets — and the society made about \$400 from the breakfast.

Speaker Bill Emerson from Ashland, who's researching the Applegate Trail for his book, "A Documentary Guide to the Original Southern Immigrant Route to Oregon," talked about the



Judy Boling, foreground, helped serve breakfast, then doubled as a tour character.

See WAGONS page 2.

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Wagons from page 1

trail's history.

After the group went on to Pottsville, the society rounded up all history buffs for a tour of the historic district.

"We did a little different format on the tour," said Executive Director Rose Scott, who organized it all. "We had a leader for the tour and as we walked around downtown we met characters from the past. It was really a living history because the characters told us about themselves and their influence or connection to an era, and brought in the history through their lives."

Mike Oaks led the group around town throwing in some interesting stories. And out of the woodwork came the characters of our past:

The tour kicked off with our own favorite predecessors, Anna and Flora Schmidt, played by Judy Boling and her daughter, Jean.

John Cova played Blind George — complete with the Great Communicator's own Daily Courier canvas bag borrowed from current owner of Blind George's, Dale Booth.

Larry McLane took on the role of one of his own antecedents, Jacob Yokum, a local harnessmaker and shop owner.

On the spritely side of town history, Sue Snyder dressed as a saloon singer with her granddaughter to accompany her on piano.

Dorothy Francis was Sadie Clevenger, who owned a millinery shop for many years near the Schmidt's grocery store on Sixth Street.

And Claudette Pruitt put in an appearance as Opal Gentner. Anyone know of Opal? She was the first woman to get behind the wheel of an automobile in Grants Pass and well known for her wild driving — at 15 miles an hour.

"We had about 16 people on the tour," Scott said. "We're hoping in the future to get enough people signed up so that we can do more than one tour."

The living history tours have become twice-yearly events — during Amazing May and again for the Heritage Days in October.

This system of having society members play roles was popular and Scott said it's likely they'll continue this tour-giving method.

"If people in the readership have characters they'd like to portray, have them call."

Think about a May outing in costume as one of your favorite characters from the past.

Letters to the editor

Oldtimer editor:

This is the first newsletter I've received and I found it very enjoyable. (Because I am a new member, it is the first.) Even if I do not know the people, the stories are interesting because when I lived in Grants Pass, my dad was active in gold "hunting."

I have written my story about Top O' the World Ranch, the Sextons and Mount Sexton. I entered it in OAHA and will know sometime in September how it rated. After that, I will send you a copy.

I had such a great time with you all in the Reference Library.

... I'd like to go to Grants Pass again — you have some wonderful events ahead.

Sincerely

Ruth Davis, Eugene

Dear Mike Oaks:

My wife thanks you very much for your continued interest in our

mysterious McDaniels. I had read the section that you mention, but although he could be related, Jacob is not listed in the 1860 census with Lewellen and his brothers. Because of the 1860 census, and the way they are listed, it looks like the brothers were James, Lewellen and William. We think the father was John B McDaniel. They were all from Kentucky and were miners in Jacksonville. With the exception of James, they were also living at the same residence.

... Our thanks again, to you, and the other members of the historical society. We are always grateful for any clues. One of the reasons that we do research is we get to meet the nicest, most helpful people in the area. In return, we try to help other researchers whenever we can.

Gary and Marlene Fellows,
Coos Bay

Pie Social prize unclaimed!

Someone who attended the July social in Wilderville hasn't claimed their door prize, a ticket to the Marine World in California. If the winner doesn't call to claim the prize it'll be "recycled" for our next society gathering.

THE OLDTIMER

is the newsletter of the Josephine County Historical Society,
508 S.W. Fifth St., Grants Pass, OR 97526.
(541) 479-7827

Annual membership dues are \$15 and include a subscription.

Edith Decker — editor

Lee Ann Tardieu & Joan Momsen
publishing committee chairmen

The circulation of The Oldtimer is 650. It is published quarterly. The publishing committee also produces an annual calendar, mailed free of charge to all members of the society.

Words from the bookshop

'Golden Days & Pioneer Ways' is back in print

By Dorothy Francis

Good news for many of us readers: Ruth Pfefferle's "Golden Days and Pioneer Ways" is back in print in time for Christmas gift giving.

This 128 pages of history of what went on in our Illinois Valley during the earliest days was first published in 1977 by the Josephine County Historical Society.

Bob and Jan Grant, owners and publishers of The Illinois Valley News gave permission to the society to use the stories from Ruth's "My Cup of Tea" column, which the Cave Junction newspaper was publishing weekly.

The book has been out of print for awhile, but now its second edition has been published by Marian (Pfefferle) Mephram, Frances (Pfefferle) Pietzel and the Illinois Valley Historical Society.

It is now available at the Schmidt

House Bookshop for \$15.95.

The first two pages give us a fine story of the ways of the Chinook, the steelhead and even a bit about the clinging cels.

There are short introductions to some of Josephine County's earliest settlements: Waldo, Kerbyville, Happy Camp (in California, but essential to the new mining industry), Holland, Selma, Browntown, Allentown and Allen Gulch.

Stories include the valley's families, schools, mines and the CCC camps that came later and the fine young people who came to work in the camps — many of whom stayed and became neighbors and friends.

Five or more of the stories were written by Ruth's husband, Phayo. The longest tells of his motorcycle trip on a Harley Davidson from Bakersfield, Calif., to Billings, Mont., by way of Grants Pass in 1926. Phayo came back from Billings without his companions

and had taken some fine side trips — he crossed over the 10,600-foot Mount Washburn in low gear.

Phayo was an auto mechanic so he gave a helping hand to those who he saw were "broken down" along the way. We figured this induced Ruth to include the interesting story of the old cars that she found in the Nevada State Journal, dated Sunday, Sept. 27, 1925. In it, Capt. E.V. Rickenbacker tells that there were 55 automobile manufacturers that year.

Other writers in this book besides Ruth and Phayo include James T. Love Jr. and George Krauss, Elsie (Walton) Hagerman and Clyde Hays, who told their stories to Ruth for her to write.

We who knew Ruth know she was a very energetic and knowledgeable person and her stories show it — they are a treasury of the ways of the people who have known a full life in one of Josephine County's beautiful valleys.

Publishing Committee news

By now you should have received the 1997 calendars — featuring the Schmidt House and the Schmidt family.

And we're so far ahead, we've already decided the theme for the 1998 calendar. (Yes, 1998!)

It'll be **HISTORIC QUILTS** and their stories. We have a dozen quilts to find that are antique, unique and have a nice story to go with them. We'll need to take photos of the quilts to be reproduced in the calendar, so they must be available.

If you have a quilt you'd be willing to include, drop us a note at the society with some background on it. Include your phone number and someone from the Publishing Committee will get back to you for details on your family heirloom.



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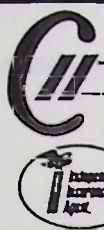
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"No Body Cares More About Your Image"

History at the center

A haunting tragedy that named a creek

By Larry McLane

The event that caused the naming of Grave Creek transpired over a two-day period from Oct. 18 to 19, 1846, and concerned the Thomas Crowley family.

The creek had been previously named Leaf Creek by the local Indians and Woodpile Creek by the Hudson Bay Trappers, due to the numerous beaver dams east of the Applegate Trail crossing.

Thomas Crowley's immediate family of 13 suffered two deaths prior to reaching the Rogue Valley, plus a cousin had died. Thomas and Catherine's married son Calvin, and their daughter Matilda were buried along the trail. Despite this heavy toll the journey wasn't over.

One of the family wagons was

being driven by a young man named David Guthrie, who was 22 years of age at the time and the fiance of the family's 16-year-old daughter, Martha.

Martha was ill with mountain fever (typhoid) prior to reaching the south side of what is presently known as Sexton Mountain. She had lapsed into a coma as the wagons struggled over the Sexton summit where the current I-5 freeway is cut.

The wagons needed 6 to 10 teams of oxen each, depending on the wagon's size and weight, to pull up the steep south side grade to a meadow on the north slope of the mountain. The teams were then unhitched and returned to the bottom and then re-hitched to another wagon and the process was repeated until all the wagons in a group were brought up. By late afternoon the northside

meadow was filled with wagons and as the last one entered the meadow, the oxen were then attached to their respective wagons and the descent was begun.

The wagon train under the guidance of wagonmaster Medders Vanderpool started down the steep draw containing the headwaters of present day Rat Creek. As the wagons proceeded down the draw, the Crowley's wagon held back as they were trying to make the ride as comfortable as possible for their fragile cargo: Martha. But as preparations were being made on the evening of Oct. 18 for the ride down, she passed away — the first white woman to die in Southern Oregon.

David Guthrie then proceeded down the draw in the dark and found the

See page 5.

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History at the center

Continued from page 4.

entire train on a flat covered with fir trees. There was no camp that night and the stock were tied to trees awaiting daylight. When dawn came, they discovered they were about a mile from a stream — one that was to be renamed that day, Oct. 19, 1846.

The immigrants moved out of the trees and came to an open field by the stream and crossed at the site of the present day covered bridge, camping by an oak tree. It was here that the golden-haired teenager was prepared for burial.

To keep observant Indians from noting the burial site — which they might later dig up to take any graveclothes — the wagons circled around the oak to hide the digging. David Guthrie, a carpenter by trade, had built coffins for the previous family members who had died. He knocked apart boxes to build another for his beloved Martha — 26 pieces in all — as

he later related.

By nightfall all was ready and under cover of darkness, Martha was laid to rest under the lonely oak tree.

In the morning the wagon train departed — but David Guthrie stayed behind and was noted to be standing under the oak tree, no doubt with a heavy heart, saying his farewells to his sweetheart and possibly thinking of what might have been as well as his bleak future without her.

Every attempt had been made to hide the grave. Wagons and cattle were driven over the site, but to no avail. The Indians did find the grave and dug up the girl's remains, according to some miners who found the spoiled site and her remains years later while heading for the California gold fields in 1848. The miners reburied her on the site.

So, for over 150 years, the tragedy of Martha Crowley has lingered for those who knew the story in the naming of a creek: Grave Creek.

A bill of divorcement

Submitted by Mike Oaks, an interesting announcement in the Oregon Sentinel of Jacksonville. The editor noted the couple had been wed just that summer.

Read and see:

Know all men by these present, that I hereby give, grant and bequeath unto my beloved husband, Prudence St. Felix, a full and free divorce from the bonds of matrimony, granting and bequeathing unto him, my beloved husband, all the happiness he can get. Witness my hand and seal, this 8th day of September A.D. 1865. This divorce is granted for a little rat colored mule which he gave me.

Mary St. Felix
X
Her Mark

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Reproductions of photos from our files are available.

In brief

■ **VINTAGE CARS PULL UP.** The Schmidt House hosted an afternoon in August for the regional meeting of the Caveman Vintage Car Club. Many visitors stopped by the house for a tour, lending an old-fashioned look to the neighborhood when they pulled up to park their nifty automobiles.

■ **LYLE FELKNER RETIRES.** After years of volunteering to lead tours at the Schmidt House and other duties, Lyle Felkner was the guest of honor at a farewell in her honor in September as she retires from volunteering. We'll miss her.

■ **WE'LL BE ON TV.** Percy and Betty Wetherbee, Lyle Felkner and Dorothy Francis were interviewed by Bernie Martin Beck about the Schmidt House for a presentation on Better Life Television, a local station that broadcasts on Channel 65. The show is set to air sometime in November. Watch for it.

■ **GENEALOGY SEMINAR SET.** Larry McLane and Opal Tice are planning to present a class at the annual genealogy seminar at the LDS Family History Center on Oct. 19 at 1 p.m. If you're interested in learning about the center's facilities or future events, call, 476-1926.

■ **MEL A SWELL ELK.** Mel Shaw was named Elk of the Month for August. He's been a great liasion between the society and our neighbors at the Elks Club.

Edward Jones

Gary Black, Jr.
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The ballot

Here's the ballot for officers, executive committee, board members and directors at large. Please follow the directions, vote, snip out this ballot and mail it to the Josephine County Historical Society, 508 S.W. Fifth St., Grants Pass, OR 97526.

Please note that the position of treasurer is vacant and no member has come forward to fill it. Therefore no candidate is on the ballot.

The deadline for ballots to reach the society — either by mail or dropped off in person — is 4 p.m. Nov. 15.

Officers

Vice President (vote for one)

- ☐ Joan Momsen
- ☐ Write in:

Treasurer (vote for one)

- ☐
- ☐ Write in:

Secretary (vote for one)

- ☐ Dorae Bowen
- ☐ Write in:

Directors at Large

(vote for three)

- ☐ Evelyn Davis
- ☐ Arden McConnell
- ☐ Judy Christensen
- ☐ Write in:

Board of Trustees

(vote for three)

- ☐ Tom Bristol
- ☐ Jim Clark
- ☐ Bob Lane
- ☐ Jim Savard
- ☐ Lee Ann Tardieu

Executive Committee

Exhibits Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Pat Bristol
- ☐ Write in:

Publishing Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Lee Ann Tardieu
- ☐ Write in:

Publicity Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Edith Decker
- ☐ Write in:

Program Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Marilyn Luttrell
- ☐ Write in:

Membership Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Claudette Pruitt
- ☐ Write in:

Properties Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Nancy Campbell
- ☐ Write in:

Bookshop Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Mel Shaw
- ☐ Write in:

Volunteer Chair (vote for one)

- ☐ Caroline Pitts
- ☐ Write in:

The name game

We had so many good ideas for renaming the Oldtimer, we thought we'd narrow them down to the ones the Publishing Committee liked and let the membership vote.

Here are the potential new names for the newsletter. Please vote for one.

- ☐ Remember when?
- ☐ Histrionics
- ☐ The Timekeeper
- ☐ The Seeker
- ☐ The Time Traveler
- ☐ The Archiver

In memorium

The society regrets to inform the membership that the following members have passed away since our last newsletter:

Edna May Hill



Robert Peck

The society would like to thank the family of Edna May Hill for honoring the work we do by asking contributions be made to the society in her name. The following people have donated in memory of Edna May Hill (1909-1996):

Mrs. J. Howard Bennett	Ann Cogswell
Harland & Bessie Fields	Charles W. Griffith
The Questors organization	William & Lois Baker
Robert & Mary Fisher	John & Doris Cova
Dorothy Francis	Bertha Rothwell
Richard & Joan Peterson	Grace Blanchard
Janet J. Lane	Claudette Pruitt
	Sidney & Mildred Griffith



A separate memorial gift was given this month by Lois Weeth in memory of her grandfather, Eugene Weston, who was born at Sailor's Diggings in 1861.

Donations and work continue on the library

By Marilyn Luttrell

Quite simply:
Progress continues!

The new building next door is coming along nicely thanks to contributors Amy Hendrickson, Bob & Yolanda Bruton, Charles Vannice, Ed & Ethyle Lester, Frank and Anna Marcel, Evelyn Davis, Robert & Mary Halstead, Bob and Janet Lane.

Their donations have paid for the water and sewer line permits and the work on these necessary utilities.

Dennis Carroll, our contractor, was given the go-ahead to begin some

inside remodeling projects, due to generous donations from community organizations like the Caveman Vintage Car Club, the Active Club and the recently disbanded Grants Pass Women's Club.

Walls are coming down, wiring and plumbing will be updated to current code standards and the exterior windows will be redone.

Trees and plants have been promised by Forest Farms and irrigation will be provided by Kelly's Irrigation.

The outside should be completed sometime in December.

THE OLDTIMER NEWSLETTER

Josephine County Historical Society
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